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**APPLICATION FOR
U.S. LETTERS PATENT**

TITLE:

RELATIONSHIP GAME

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Title

Relationship Game

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to board games and more particularly to a board game system that promotes positive and healthy relationship skills through interactive play while avoiding traps aimed at reducing the player's self-esteem.

Background of the Invention

A wide variety of board games are known in the prior art, providing various forms of entertainment to players. Prior art games may incorporate any one or all of the following aspects: strategy, chance, artistic skill, knowledge, or memory to name a few. However, as far as it is known, none of the prior art games are specifically directed to and capable of promoting positive and healthy relationship skills and high self esteem in the players.

The present board game system described herein for promoting positive and healthy relationship skills thus departs from the conventional concepts and designs of the games known and recognized in the gaming prior art by incorporating interactive group discussion with fictional fact patterns and multiple-choice questions.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention provides a new board game, and a method of playing the game, which has a primary purpose of promoting positive and healthy relationship skills

through interactive play, through the discussion of fictional and real life situations. Another aspect of the invention is to promote relationships, and prevent the loss of self-esteem, through open discussion among the players. The invention provides an environment designed to promote free flowing, open discussion regarding relationships and relationship skills.

To attain this, the invention has both method and apparatus aspects. The method aspects of the invention include providing a game apparatus that includes a method of playing a relationship game for a plurality of players, comprising: generating a random whole number for a player, moving a game piece of the player along path a number of spaces corresponding to the random number, the spaces having an indicia selected from a first indicia, a second indicia, a third indicia, and a fourth indicia, drawing a card from a set corresponding to the indicia of the space, performing the task as indicated on the game card, using an answer guide to determine if the player has performed the task indicated on the game card correctly and moving the player's game piece along the path as indicated within the answer guide based upon the player's answer, and winning the game by being the first player to reach the finishing space of the game spaces. In one embodiment of the game, the method of game play further includes cards provided comprising: a first subset of cards having multiple choice questions, a second subset of cards having questions designed to stimulate group discussion, and a third subset of cards further comprising cards selected from the group of multiple choice cards and cards having worded situations and instructions.

The apparatus aspect of the invention includes a game apparatus comprising: a game container, a game board having a path for advancing a game piece of a player

along, the path comprising a plurality of game spaces for advancing the game piece of a player as the player moves along the game path. A first portion of the game spaces are marked with a first indicia, a second portion of the game spaces are marked with a second indicia, a third portion of the game spaces are marked with a third indicia, and a fourth portion of the game spaces are marked with a fourth indicia. The apparatus further includes game pieces of each individual player, wherein each game piece is different, e.g. different color, a plurality of sets of game cards including: a first set of the plurality of cards being associated with the game space marked with the first indicia, the first card set comprising multiple choice questions based upon situations arising in a relationship, a second set of the plurality of cards being associated with the game space marked with the second indicia, the second card set comprising personal questions directed to the player's personal life to initiate group discussion, a third set of the plurality of cards being associated with the game space marked with the third indicia, the third card set comprising cards selected from subsets having multiple choice questions based upon situations arising in a relationship and having a worded situation and instructions to move the player's game piece, a plurality of answer guides corresponding to the multiple choice cards, and a method for generating random numbers. The game apparatus may further include a portion of the game spaces are located substantially within the perimeter of the game board. The game apparatus may further comprise a time keeping device. At least one of the plurality of spaces is a start space. The game apparatus further includes game playing instructions. In one embodiment, the game board is designed to form a compact arrangement wherein the components of the game fit within the game board.

There has thus been outlined, rather broadly, some of the more important features of the invention.

In this respect, it is understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of construction and to the arrangements of the components set forth in the following description or illustrated drawings. The invention is capable of other embodiments and methods of practice. Also, the phraseology and terminology used herein are for the purpose of description and should therefore not be regarded as limiting in any way. As such, those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that the present invention, upon which this disclosure is based, may readily be utilized as a basis for the designing of other structures, methods and systems for carrying out the several purposes of the present invention. It should be recognized that the above list of objects, features, and advantages is in no way comprehensive, and that others will be appreciated by those skilled in the art.

Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG. 1 is a schematic plan view of one embodiment of the game board of the new game system for promoting positive and healthy relationship skills.

FIG. 2 is a schematic view of a typical deck of the playing cards.

FIG. 3 is a schematic flow diagram of the method aspects of the present invention.

FIG. 4 is a view of an example of the multiple-choice questions.

FIG. 5 is a view of an example of the trouble multiple-choice questions.

FIG. 6 is a view of an example of the wild cards.

FIG. 7 is a view of an example of one of the penalty area cards.

FIG. 8 is a view of an example of the answer guide to the multiple-choice questions.

FIG. 9 is a view of an example of the answer guide to the trouble multiple-choice questions.

Detailed Description

Referring now to the drawings, the apparatus of the present invention is illustrated and generally indicated at 100 in FIG. 1. As will hereinafter be more fully described, the present game apparatus 100 is utilized in an illustrated board game designed to promote positive and healthy relationship skills through interactive play and to promote high self esteem through interactive discussions among the players. By presenting situations arising in a relationship from which the player must make selections, the present game apparatus may also be utilized to educate and better enable players to interact socially and avoid pitfalls and similar situations in the future.

The present invention can be applied to a wide variety of relationships, without regard to gender, race, age, or sexual orientation. The relationships may be based upon human interaction in a variety of settings, including but not limited to, personal, social, work, and cultural settings. Thus, it is understood that the board game of the present invention may be adapted to focus on many different relationships, including but not limited to those between men and women from both the male and female perspective, between men and other men, and women and other women in personal, social and/or work settings, between adolescents as they learn to interact, or between members of different cultural backgrounds as they are educated regarding other cultural groups.

As is illustrated in FIGS. 1 through 9, one aspect of the invention comprises a game apparatus for promoting positive and healthy relationship skills through interactive play and another aspect of the invention comprises a method of playing the game apparatus in a manner promoting positive and healthy relationship skills.

The game apparatus 100 may include a game board, and on the top surface of the game board is marked a path 110 along which the game piece (not shown) of each individual player is moved. The path 110 may have a portion positioned about the perimeter of the game board and it may have a portion positioned substantially within the perimeter of the game board. The path may comprise a plurality of spaces 112 for advancing the game piece of a player as the player moves upon the game path 110. It is understood that the example game board shown in FIG. 1 is merely an example of one embodiment of the present invention. The number of actual spaces and the specific location of each of the spaces on the individual playing surface is not limited to the placement shown in FIG. 1.

In one embodiment of the invention, a substantial portion of the plurality of spaces 112 have indicia marked thereon. The significance of the indicia will be discussed in greater detail below in the context of discussing the manner of playing the game. One of the plurality of spaces 112 comprises a start space 114, which may have "START" or a similar indicia marked thereon. The start space 114 may have a directional arrow (not shown) marked thereon for indicating to the players a direction of movement of the game pieces by the players as they are advancing their game pieces along game path 110. In addition, the game path may comprise a finishing point 124.

In one embodiment of the invention, the plurality of spaces 112 along the game path 110 may be associated any one of a different number of tasks, and may have indicia associating each space with a different type of task. A first portion of the plurality of spaces may be associated with the first card deck 116. A second portion of the plurality of spaces may be associated with the second card deck 118. A third portion of the plurality of spaces 122 may be associated with the player having to move their game piece to the penalty area 126. A fourth portion of the plurality of spaces 120 may be associated with the penalty area 126. Preferably, the different spaces among the plurality of spaces are randomly placed throughout the game path. The placement of the spaces in FIG. 1 is merely demonstrative of one possible placement of the individual spaces on the playing surface.

Each of the plurality of spaces may be associated with a specific theme or task for the player to undertake. For example, the spaces associated with the first card deck may require the player to complete a multiple-choice question based upon a fictional relationship situation. The spaces associated with the second card deck may require the player to complete a more difficult multiple-choice question based upon a fictional relationship situation. The spaces associated with the third card deck may require the player to confess or relate a personal experience as described on the card.

Additionally, a plurality of areas (not shown) may be positioned along the game board and the game path 110. In one embodiment of the invention, these areas do not count as spaces along the game path 110 and the player advancing along the game path does not place their game piece in these non-playing areas. These areas may comprise a countryside scene, which may further comprise barns, trees, hills, meadows, farms and

other farmyard animals. The board may also comprise a variety of illustrations of different goats.

The game board may also include a designated area where the cards are to be placed. The area may be located about the perimeter of the game-playing surface, or it may be located substantially within the perimeter of the game-playing surface. The area designated for the cards preferably is marked with an indicia indicating which set of cards is to be placed in that designated spot.

The playing board may be of any shape or size, generally allowing for a group of people, preferably between 2 and 6 adults, to gather around. The board may be constructed of a material allowing it to be folded in half for storage purposes. Preferably, the game board is constructed of a heavy fabric or material upon which the game-playing surface has been applied by silkscreen or other known method. The material playing surface preferably comprises a means for folding the playing surface and retaining the playing pieces. The board may comprise a storage means for the parts of the game, including the cards, player pieces, dice and time keeping device. Optionally, the board may be rolled up and stored in a clear plastic cylinder allowing a portion of the playing surface to be seen through the storage device for display purposes.

In addition to the game board, the game apparatus may also include individual playing pieces for each player. The playing pieces are used to indicate the player's position along the game path. The game pieces may each be a different color to allow players to identify their individual pieces. The game pieces may optionally be formed in the shape of a goat, or may incorporate a visual indicia of a goat.

The game apparatus may also include a means for generating random numbers, including one or more die or a numbered spinner for generating random numbers indicating to players the number of spaces to advance along the game path. If used, the die may have four, six or eight sides.

The game apparatus may also include a timing apparatus. The timing apparatus may be an hourglass containing sand designed to operate for a specific amount of time, it may be battery operated, or it may be operated through a winding mechanism. The timing apparatus may be designed to operate for a specified amount of time, preferably for 3-minute intervals of time.

The game apparatus may also include a plurality of sets of cards, each individual card having visual indicia on the top of the card corresponding to the space on the game board associated with the playing card (Shown generally in Fig. 2, wherein the card may be identified with either a textual or pictorial indicia). Each of the plurality of sets of cards may include a first subset of basic cards, which comprises a series of cards having fictional relationship situations requiring the player to make a decision (examples of the questions shown in FIG. 4), a second subset of trouble cards, which comprises a series of cards having difficult fictional relationship situations requiring a decision (examples of the questions shown in FIG. 5) or a wild card (examples of the questions shown in FIG. 6), and a third subset of discussion cards, which comprises a series of cards requiring players to confess or relate a personal experience (examples shown in FIG. 7). The game apparatus may also include a card holding device (not shown) designed to hold each of the plurality of sets of cards, preferably constructed out of plastic.

The game apparatus may also include a plurality of answer guides providing answers to the fictional relationship situations found in the plurality of sets of cards. FIG. 8 shows the answers to the first question shown in FIG. 4 and is typical for the answer guide. FIG. 9 shows the answer to the first question shown in FIG. 5 and is typical for the answer guide. The answer guides may include commentary regarding the different answer choices, as well as instructions for the players depending on the answer selected by the player. The instructions found in the answer guides may include instructions regarding the movement of the player's game piece at the end of the players turn.

The method aspect of the invention for playing the game may be practiced using one or more elements of the game apparatus described above, and is generally shown in Fig. 3. In the practice of the game, all players generate a random number, either by rolling one or more dice (with each player rolling the same number of dice), or spinning a numbered spinner. The player with the highest roll initiates the game. Each player initiates his or her turn by generating a random number to determine the number of spaces to advance along the game path. The player may move his or her game piece along the game path a number of spaces corresponding to the value generated by the spinner or dice, beginning at START 114. The player lands his or her game piece on one of the plurality of spaces.

The player may select one card from the particular subset of the plurality of cards corresponding to the indicia that is marked on the space upon which the player's game piece has landed, or by moving the player's game piece to the appropriate space if the indicia indicates that the piece should be moved. The player will then read the card selected and perform the task indicated by the card.

During his or her turn, the player's game piece may land on one of four different spaces; a first space associated with drawing a basic multiple choice relationship card, a second space associated with drawing a more difficult multiple choice relationship card, a third space requiring the player to go to the penalty area, and a fourth space not associated with any particular task (a free space).

If the player's game piece lands on the first space, the player will select the top card of the first card deck, one of the subsets of the plurality of cards. Typically, the first card deck presents the player with a fictional relationship fact pattern from which the player must select the most appropriate answer. The player will read the question aloud, select one of three choices given on the card, and return the card to the bottom of the deck. One of the other players, preferably the person seated to player's right, will look up the answer in the corresponding answer guide. The answer guide will instruct the player whether to move their game piece including whether to move ahead a number of spaces, move backward a number of spaces, or to remain in the current position.

If the player's game piece lands on the second space, the player will select the top card of the second card deck, one of the subsets of the plurality of cards. Typically, the second card deck presents the player with a more troublesome fictional relationship fact pattern, typically more difficult than those presented in the first card deck, from which the player must select the most appropriate answer. The player will read the question aloud, select one of three choices given on the card, and return the card to the bottom of the deck. One of the other players, preferably the person seated to player's right, will look up the answer in the corresponding answer guide. The answer guide will instruct the player of the consequences of the player's answer choice, whether the player moves his

or her game piece forward or backward, or whether the player's game piece has been sent to the penalty area.

If the player's game piece lands on the space associated with the penalty area, the player will move his or her game piece directly to the penalty area of the corresponding color. On the next turn, the player will select the top card from the third card deck, associated with the penalty area. A more detailed description of the penalty area is described below.

If the player's game piece ends up in the penalty area, either from being sent there when landing on the space associated with the penalty area, or as a result of the answer selected from the second card deck, or from the wild card, the player may not roll the dice on the subsequent turn. Instead, the player must select the top card from the penalty card deck, and read the instructions, which generally consist of discussions and/or confessions regarding relationships. The player then follows the instructions on the card. The other players may participate, either by further questioning the player, or adding their own answers to the question. The discussion should take approximately 3 minutes, and the players may optionally use a time apparatus to keep the game flowing smoothly. The following turn, the player exiting the penalty area, places their game piece in the free space along the game path, and is allowed to roll the die or dice, or spin the spinner, and move the corresponding number of spaces.

If a player's game piece lands on an occupied space, the game piece of the player previously occupying the space is moved to the nearest penalty area and the player proceeds to follow the instructions as provided above. If dice are being used to generate the number of spaces to move, and two dice are being rolled, if the same number is rolled

on each dice on an individual roll, that player is granted another turn, provided the player did not end up in the penalty area as a result of the initial roll of the dice.

During his or her turn, the player will draw from one of the subsets of the plurality of cards. The subsets of cards may comprise a first card deck, a second card deck and a third, or penalty area, card deck. The first card deck provides fictional relationship situations from which the player's must select the most appropriate answer. Subsequent movement of the player's game piece is dependent upon the player's answer to the question presented on the card. The second card deck consist of either a fictional relationship situation from which the player must select the most appropriate answer, or a wild card, having instructions to be followed regarding the movement of the player's game piece. The third, or penalty area, card deck cards consist of a task, generally describing a personal relationship situation. These cards are designed to lead to group discussion. Each of the subsets of cards preferably consists of at least 20 cards. The decks may be supplemented with new cards as the players become familiar with the cards that originally arrive with the game apparatus.

The player finishing the game by reaching the finishing point first is considered the winner. However in one embodiment of the game the game continues even after the first player has finished. The object of the game continuing is for the players to continue to have open discussion regarding the subjects covered in the game.

With respect to the above description, it is to be realized that the optimum dimensional relationships for the parts of the invention, to include variations in size, materials, shape, form, function and manner of operation, assembly and use, are deemed readily apparent and obvious to one skilled in the art. All equivalent relationships to

those illustrated in the drawings and described in the specification are intended to be encompassed by the present invention. The present invention is not intended to be limited to the exact construction and operation as described above and all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of this invention.